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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001381

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER
DAKAR AND PRETORIA FOR A/S KANSTEINER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: HARARE MAYOR ARRESTED, RELEASED AND RE-ARRESTED

REF: HARARE 863

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

[1](#)1. (C) In his first days back at work following a trip to the U.S. and the UK, Harare Executive Mayor Elias Mudzuri was arrested by police at his office both on July 7 and 8. Minister of Local Government Ignatious Chombo attempted to suspend Mudzuri in April 2003 for alleged incompetence and malfeasance; however, the matter is still pending in the courts. Mudzuri returned to his office on July 7 and 8, in spite of his pending suspension and facing arrest, to publicize the lack of rule of law in Zimbabwe. This could be one of the few times an elected MDC official has turned an attack by the GOZ to his own political advantage. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On his first day back at work following a trip to the U.S. and the UK, Harare Executive Mayor Elias Mudzuri was arrested by police at his office on July 7. Police held Mudzuri for about half an hour, then released him without charge. Police warned him that if he returned to his office, he would spend the night in a police cell. On July 8 the Mayor again went to his office with his lawyer, and was met by riot police who took him to the notorious Law and Order section of Harare Central Police Station for questioning. According to his lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa, the Mayor went to his office on both days to confront arrest, in order to publicize the lack of rule of law in Zimbabwe to the Africa Unity (AU) Summit currently ongoing in neighboring Maputo, and to President Bush currently on a five-nation Africa visit.

[1](#)3. (SBU) This is the latest salvo in an ongoing attack on the Mayor by the Minister of Local Government, Ignatious Chombo. Chombo attempted to suspend Mudzuri in April 2003 for allegedly failing to properly hire and fire city employees, alleged mismanagement of city funds, and alleged failure to provide Harare residents with basic services. Mudzuri's lawyer argued in an urgent court application on May 29 that the suspension was contrary to Zimbabwe's Urban Councils Act, and that, in fact, the GOZ was obstructing the Mayor in his efforts to provide basic services to the city's residents. Mudzuri has stated publicly that Minister Chombo's real objection is to his exposure of ZANU-PF corruption in jobs and contracts. The high court judge who heard the case has inexplicably not yet issued a judgment. The Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) has rejected the mayor's suspension.

[1](#)4. (C) The Mayor visited the U.S. recently on a trip partly sponsored by the Embassy's Voluntary Visitor program, and partly sponsored by other organizations (Ref). His trip included a conference of mayors in Denver, CO, the Corporate Council on Africa annual meeting in Washington, DC, and a Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government leadership training course for public officials.

Comment:

[1](#)5. (C) Mayor Mudzuri suffers from high blood pressure, and his trip was in part timed to reduce the stress he experienced daily from harassment by police and other government officials. Emboffs spoke to the Mayor on July 7, and the Ambassador spoke to him on July 8; all observed that he had returned from his trip refreshed and combative. Notwithstanding his medical condition, as one of Zimbabwe's most prominent public officials, he is confident and enjoys a good fight. He will likely continue to use his controversial suspension as a platform for public protest. This could be one of the rare times an elected MDC official has turned an attack by the GOZ to his own p